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CO-VE BORDER

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B2 9151864 SUR

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1665

INFO RUESBG/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 6133

BT

EZ1:

UNCLAS CARACAS 7610

EZ2:

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 3)

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E.O. 12065: N/A

TAGS: PEPR VE VO

SUBJECT: TURBAY- HERRERA MEETING IN BORDER TOWN OF SAN ANTONIO

REF: (A) CARACAS 7563, (B) BOGOTA 8082, (C) CARACAS 7599

1. THE MEETING BETWEEN OUTGOING PRESIDENTS HERRERA AND TURBAY IN SAN ANTONIO DEL TACHIRA ON JULY 28 HAS BEEN REPORTED AS A CORDIAL GOOD-BYE OF FRIENDS, WITH HERRERA MAKING AN OFFICIAL GESTURE OF ESTEEM TO PRESIDENT TURBAY WHO SOON LEAVES OFFICE. IN SEPARATE SPEECHES THE TWO PRESIDENTS RECALLED THEIR OWN AND THEIR COUNTRIES' FRIENDSHIP, NOTING THE CLOSE GEOGRAPHIC, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS. AS EXPECTED, PRESIDENT HERRERA DECORATED PRESIDENT TURBAY WITH THE "ORDER OF THE LIBERATOR", THE HIGHEST AWARD GIVEN TO CHIEFS OF STATE OF FRIENDLY NATIONS.

2. THE ONLY SOUR NOTE THAT WAS HINTED AT IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS WAS A REFERENCE MADE BY PRESIDENT TURBAY IN HIS SPEECH CONCERNING EVENTS IN THE CARIBBEAN. TURBAY NOTED THAT BOTH VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA PLAY A POWERFUL ROLE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN AND WENT ON TO SAY THE "WE HAVE TO NOTICE THAT NEW WINDS BLOW OVER THE WILD SEAS OF THE CARIBBEAN, THAT THE SITUATION OF YESTERDAY, PEACEFUL AND TRANQUIL, HAS CONVULSED AND THAT IT IS NOT IMPROBABLE THAT THERE MIGHT BE, IF IT IS NOT

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ALREADY HAPPENING, A DESIGN OF EXTRACONTINENTAL POWERS THAT WANT TO CONVERT US INTO AN OBJECT OF THEIR ASPIRATIONS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR WORLD DOMINATION." TURBAY LEFT THIS SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS SENTENCE TO STAND ON ITS OWN AND RETURNED THEN TO THE CORDIAL AND FORMAL TONE HE HAD BEEN USING. (PRESUMABLY THIS WAS AN OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO SOVIET EXPANSION IN THE AREA, BUT WE LEAVE IT TO EMBASSY BOGOTA TO MAKE A MORE AUTHORITATIVE JUDGEMENT.)

3. COLOMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTER LEMOS SIMMONDS ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE MEETING TO SAY THAT HE FELT HIS REMARKS OVER VENEZUELA'S DECISION NOT TO SIGN THE LAW OF THE SEA TREATY HAD BEEN MISINTERPRETED AND THAT HE HELD NOTHING BUT RESPECT AND AFFECTION FOR VENEZUELA. IN WHAT APPARENTLY WAS AN INFORMAL INTERVIEW WITH MEMBERS OF THE PRESS WHO WERE ON HAND FOR THE MEETING, THE FOREIGN MINISTER EXPLAINED THAT HIS ONLY OBJECT IN MAKING SUCH AN OBSERVATION HAD BEEN TO "CORDIALLY EXHORT" VENEZUELA, A COUNTRY WITH WHICH HE HOPED COLOMBIA WOULD STRENGTHEN ITS TIES. LEMOS SIMMONDS ALSO NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA INTENDED TO REMAIN ENTIRELY NEUTRAL ON THE QUESTION OF VENEZUELA'S CLAIM TO THE ESSEQUIBO. IN RESPONSE TO FURTHER QUESTIONING, HE TOLD REPORTERS THEY WOULD HAVE TO ASK THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WHAT ITS POLICY WOULD BE WHEN IT IS INSTALLED.

4. IF THE QUESTION OF THE THREE BORDER INCIDENTS WHICH THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY HAS ALLEGED TOOK PLACE RECENTLY CAME UP IN THE MEETING (REF C) NO REFERENCE TO IT WAS MADE BY VENEZUELAN MEDIA. PRESS COVERAGE OF THE MEETING WAS EXTENSIVE, AND MOST PAPERS AND TV STATIONS HAVE GIVEN PROMINENT ATTENTION TO SHOTS OF THE TWO PRESIDENTS LAYING A CORNER STONE FOR THE NEW "FRIENDSHIP" PARK WHICH IS TO BE BUILT BETWEEN THE COLOMBIAN AND VENEZUELAN CUSTOMS HOUSES NEAR THIS FRONTIER TOWN.

5. COMMENT. VENEZUELAN-COLOMBIAN RELATIONS ARE NEVER EASY NOR TROUBLE FREE, BUT SUCH PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO PRESIDENTS ARE EVIDENCE INTENTIONS OF BOTH CARACAS AND BOGOTA TO KEEP RELATIONS-- AND PROBLEMS-- ON AN EVEN KEEL.

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